THE MEMPHIS COLLEGE OF ART
INTERVIEW WITH
MRS. PHYLLIS TICKLE

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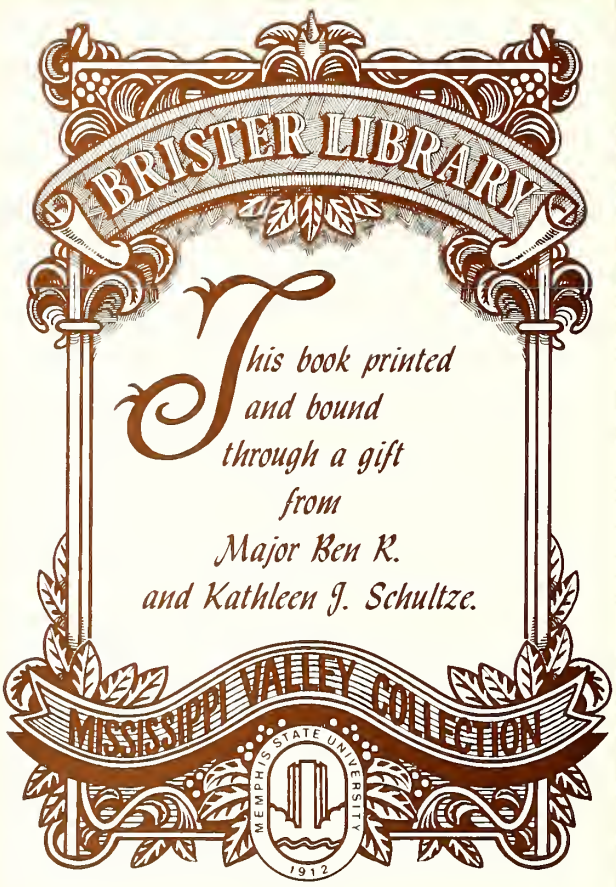
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INTERVIEW WITH MRS. PHYLLIS TICKLE

SEPTEMBER 12, 1988

BY DOUGLAS W. CUPPLES

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ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE

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PLACE Lucy, Tennessee

DATE September 12, 1988

(INTERVIEWEE) Phyllis TICKLE

(For the Mississippi Valley Archives of the John Willard Brister Library of Memphis State University)

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THIS IS MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE PROJECT "THE MEMPHIS COLLEGE OF ART." THE DATE IS SEPTEMBER 12, 1988. INTERVIEW WITH MRS. PHYLLIS TICKLE, PAST DEAN OF HUMANITIES AT THE COLLEGE. THE ADDRESS IS 3522 LUCY ROAD SOUTH, NORTH OF MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, IN SHELBY COUNTY. THE INTERVIEWER IS DOUGLAS W. CUPPLES. TRANSCRIBED BY DOUGLAS W. CUPPLES[1]

MR. CUPPLES: The project is the Memphis College of Art, and its function in training professional artists, [and] its role in the community. That is, the City of Memphis and the Mid-South, as well as the role of art and artists in the Mid-South. First of all, I would like a little biographical information about yourself. So, if you don't mind, tell me your full name, maiden name, when and where you were born, and a little about your background.

DEAN TICKLE: I was born Phyllis Alexander. At some point, probably illegally, picked up the Phyllis Natalie Alexander, and so you see it both ways. Now, obviously, I go as Phyllis A. Tickle primarily, and most of the writing appears as either Phyllis Tickle or Phyllis A. Tickle.

Born in Johnson City [Tennessee] in March of 1934. My father was Academic Dean [of East Tennessee State University]. Well, he was many things, but the biggest part of his tenure was as Academic Dean of the University in Johnson City. He served at

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[1]Some variations between the oral tape interview and the transcription exist. These are a result of editing for clarification or correction by Dean Tickle and are indicated by brackets.

its President for one period of time, and as the Dean of its graduate school, and various and sundry, but the bulk of it was as its Academic Dean. So, I grew up in academe. Grew up primarily, of course, in the state system, and the College of Art is one of the few city-owned colleges. I guess it's the only city-owned college of art in the South as a matter of fact. But it's the only municipally owned one in the City of Memphis, and one of the few municipally owned colleges in the state of Tennessee. So, I can't claim any [prior] intimacy with [either] the College of Art or with that idea of a municipally-managed institution of higher education.

But, I grew-up in higher education, and the understanding was always I think, in his mind--my father's mind--because I was an only child, that I would go into the academic world. I wanted originally to be a writer and then decided, in the glow of young love with Sam [Tickle], that I was going to be a doctor instead. Well, that lasted about six weeks into pre-med before I realized that language really was my love.

So, because my father was at East Tennessee [State University], I was sent away for three years to Shorter College for the education of longer women we use to say [laughing] [in which] I [certainly] qualify in Georgia, and [I] did three years of undergraduate in what was then called comparative philology, which was wonderful training for a writer, but the field doesn't even exist now. Noam Chomsky came along, and turned it all around, and we got linguistics.

And, in a way, comparative philology was a prerequisite, a [necessary] forerunner, of linguistics.

Nonetheless, I had the three years, and when I transferred for my last year--in order to take my degree where my father was--well, when I transferred I think I ended up with the most bizarre transcript. [At Shorter] I had a minor in Greek and a minor in Latin, neither one of which East Tennessee State taught of course. I had a ninety-hour latin minor, and a first minor in Spanish which they did teach, and we managed to squeak a major in English by converting some of the Latin to English. It was bizarre.

But anyway, I came out of undergraduate at [my father's] institution, and came to Memphis with Sam, and we were here briefly while he finished med school. And at that time I taught Latin for the city schools for two years. Then, after he had finished internship, we went to South Carolina where he opened a general practice. He wanted to do some [general] work before he actually began to specialize in [Internal] Medicine. I think he knew all along he wanted to do lung work, but it's a long row, and a man needs some general experience first. So, we went off, for four years, I guess.

During that time [I] was privileged to be a Fellow of the University at Furman. It had been a little over a hundred years since that institution had had a fellow. So, it was kind of a glorious experience for me. And then, I also took my Master's there, and that one legitimately did end up being in English and educational theory, because they had no Latin at all. Those were

the days--we're down to the early 1960s--when nobody did comparative language. Then, [I] went on to teach at Furman.

When he got ready to come back here and do those three years of Internal Medicine, and then the three years of lung, and then the final two--there are eight years above the internship to do what he does--when he was doing those years, I was very lucky, again, that Rhodes, which use to be then Southwestern, Rhodes extended me an invitation to come as lecturer to the college. We had three children, little children, so I was very lucky to be able to go in and practice, what was at that stage, my profession. (Although I had been writing some all along, I had not been actively doing it because we had three of the seven children already with us.)

So, I was at Rhodes, as a lecturer, for three years I suppose. No, for two years. I had been there for two years under Quincy Wolf. At that time Jameson Jones was Provost at Rhodes, and Ted Rust was Director of the College of Art [which] was safely ensconced in Overton Park and in the new building. The old building now, but it was new then. When I had been at Rhodes for two years, which would be I guess 1963, the Summer of 1963, the phone rang, and it was this voice saying "You don't know me, but I'm Ted Rust, and Jameson Jones and I think you're the one we need. Will you come talk to me?" And I said "Yes, about what?" And he said "We need to get a humanist over here at the College of Art."

At that time, as you probably know, the kids who were doing a lot of studio art at Rhodes were coming across, [to the Academy

to get part of it]. There was a very minimal studio program on campus at Rhodes. Their kids were coming across North Parkway and expanding the course offerings, and their curriculum by taking classes with the College of Art kids in studio. By the same token, the College of Art kids were expanding their humanities offerings by going across and taking humanities classes at Rhodes. Later we were to call it a consortium, and we were--in the late 1960s--to expand it, and CBC was going to join, did join it in fact. We functioned [during that time] with an active consortium. We made it legal, and we tied it down with paper work. I can't remember, Sienna was part of that, too. So, that the two Catholic schools, the College of Art, and Rhodes had a frank consortium with Ad Valorem credit swap and the whole nine yards.

But, this was much more naive, much more cordial. It was two institutions who complemented each other, who were geographically right at each other, and who shared faculty. Now, at that time, and as far as I know, to this very day, faculty went back and forth to some extent, too. And that first year, which would have been 1963-1964; I went back and forth.

I had an office on the second floor of the College of Art. My office was right outside of Life Drawing, and opened on to that mezzanine or balcony, whatever one wants to call it. It really was an old drawing room, [that] was what they gave me; [that] is the truth of it, or a studio office. But, anyway, kids crawled in and out through the glass wall to get to me. But Ted put me up there, and that gave him his first humanist who actually had an

office. And I jumped at it, I just truly by then was feeling that I needed a more creative academic situation than Rhodes.

Rhodes was, at that time, and I suspect is still, a graduate school prep. I mean that's what they are. That's a perfectly fair statement, that's not a pejorative. They just were in the business of preparing kids to go on to something else. And when you're in that kind of situation, the bull's eye is very defined, its very focused. The bull's eye is whatever the next layer is. And the bull's eye is getting me prepared to go do whatever the next layer is. So, that kids in that kind of undergraduate school are more reluctant to wander down the primrose paths. In a way, they are an older edition of a good secondary student or a good prep school student because they are very focused. And they are seeing this, not as a terminal degree, but as the way to a terminal degree which is going to make them "real."

And I was restive, I think because God really probably did mean for me to be a writer. I was having trouble, I was struggling with good kids, fine kids who were all pre-med, or pre-law, or pre-engineering, or pre, God knows what, but they were pre. They were waiting to get born into their lives. They weren't in them yet, and it was driving me bananas. So, when Ted called, I said "yes." I just agreed on the phone. I remembered later to ask him what he was going to pay me, and then I laughed my head off. "Surely you jest," [I said] but it turned out he didn't. Because there was no money back then. He meant it. You worked for the glory, and we only charge you $5.00 an hour to do it.

Anyway, it was good for me to be there. The Southern Association came through right before my first year began. The Southern Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges. As you know, every ten years you have to reaccredit if you're a senior college in this country. And the Academy's accreditation came up for review in 1963.

MR. CUPPLES: Do you know when they were originally accredited?

DEAN TICKLE: I think 1953. It was a Rustism.

MR. CUPPLES: And that was when they were first accredited?

DEAN TICKLE: [Academically, yes,] that's right. And the accreditation was an interesting thing, and I walked right into that mare's nest . . . because accreditation says "we're going to play by the world's rules," and the atelier tradition in art education thumbs its nose as the world. There is a great deal to be said for thumbing your nose at the world, especially in the arts, as we all know. The very thing I didn't like about Rhodes, and I was very happy at Rhodes, I don't mean that [I wasn't]--but the thing that made me restive, was that it worked by the world's rules, and they were very clear rules, and they would get a wonderful product.

What prouder degree for a kid to have, even to this day, than a Rhodes College degree? It's one of the seventy ivy league. It does its thing well, and its thing involves knowing what the rules are and obeying them, and teaching a kid how to function within them.

By the same token, art must break the rules. Or [rather] it must learn them; it must know them and respect them; and then know which ones to break. That's what I'm trying to say. It is not iconoclasticism, that's self-indulgence. But, to be meaningful within the arts, one must both be cognizant of those rules and free to hear his own soul when it begins to question which of those is a viable and reasonable rule.

Accreditation, when it came in 1953, as I believe that was the correct [date], was a step toward knuckling under to the system, and it was so perceived by the older faculty. When I walked in there in 1963, they had just gone through the hell of a 10 year study. Their ruling was not back yet, but they didn't like the fact. It was still a sore point. It was like talking to Episcopalians about the new prayer book. Twenty years later they're still fighting about it.

The place that the cheese got binding was that it was a violation of the atelier.

MR. CUPPLES: The old established method?

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, the old method of teaching. Out of which most of that old faculty had been trained. My own undergraduate [was atelier], interestingly enough, and I think this is one of the reasons I always fit [at the Academy]. When I went to Shorter College, as an undergraduate, it was in the days

before CLEP[2], and advanced placement--all those words were going to come later--this was the early 1950s.

When I went to Shorter College as an undergraduate, they interviewed you, and they did test you. I was very lucky. I was immediately put in tutorial. So, my undergraduate training became the atelier, the Oxfordian. I checked in at 8:00, 8:30, 9:00 o'clock, whenever the spirit moved me, with my major professor. And I damn well sat there till we were through, and that could be just any old time. According to how tired she was, how tired I was.

So, I grew. The education of my soul took place under the atelier, which is why my transcript to East Tennessee State was an unbelievable hodgepodge . . . because I had no hours, I just took that. And that tradition was very dear to my heart because I had personally experienced its worth. I knew its richness. It may have been part of the reason I was restive at Rhodes. It certainly was one of the reasons I was enormously happy at the College of Art, and enormously sympathetic with the older faculty, Martha Turner, ...

MR. CUPPLES: I was going to say, before we get too far, let's identify the older faculty.

DEAN TICKLE: Martha Turner, Thorne Edwards, Thorne, in pottery, who had . . . [well,] who didn't have a degree. See, part of the [problem was that the old faculty commitment to the atelier was] not just an emotional commitment to a method of

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[2]College Learning Equivalency Program which was administered and awards college credit on the basis of tests.

teaching, to a theory of epistemology. But part of it was that people who were trained that way didn't have degrees as such. They didn't have that piece of paper that the "system" required. Now, in a real way, if I hadn't transferred to East Tennessee State, God knows what I would have had. We made [mine] up out of whole cloth to transfer in because the Registrar at Shorter just sat there with the East Tennessee State catalogue [and said,] "You have to have this, this, and this. We will call this right here this, this," and we did it.

You can do that when its a kid who's transferring to a known institution. When you are the chair of a department as Thorn [Edwards] was chair of Sculpture, you can't go back and reinvent your undergraduate. Especially if you didn't have one. Martha [Turner] was caught in that. I think she finally did make some compensation. Nadine [Parker] was caught in this. Nadine Parker, who I think just ended up . . . [I'm not sure.] I don't think she ever laid claim to a degree [anyway]. Burton [Callicott] was part of this. Now, Ted Faiers had one. Ted Faiers, I think he had an honest-to-God card-carrying degree. John McIntyer, [a] wonderful example. Sandy Kincannon. Who else? I'm drawing a blank.

MR. CUPPLES: You've mentioned Ted Faiers.

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, who were the more vocal ones?

MR. CUPPLES: Georgia McHenry?

DEAN TICKLE: Georgia falls in that category. Dorothy [Sturm] never had a degree.

MR. CUPPLES: Dorothy Sturm?

DEAN TICKLE: That's right. See, there's atelier out of Chicago. And that was about the bulk of us. We were maybe twenty.

MR. CUPPLES: That's the old guard?

DEAN TICKLE: That's the old guard. Jason Williamson with no degree. But you see, all these people had, they had it, and so when I walked into that mess, what I walked into was people who, like me, had been trained one way and believed earnestly in the worth of that method, which was atelier. Who also were being compromised by the fact they couldn't validate, under the requirements of the new system, their right to be there.

MR. CUPPLES: You came though with, not only a degree and graduate study . . . .

DEAN TICKLE: I came with graduate degree. I was legitimate. Ted was legitimate.

MR. CUPPLES: Ted Rust [Edwin C. Rust]?

DEAN TICKLE: Ted was [a graduate of] Deep Springs [College], with one of the best undergraduate degrees, and Yale, at the M.A. level. We laughed. Talking about being validated, we were the Bobbsie twins! It was one of those really sad problems. This is not funny when you've caught in that kind of thing.

MR. CUPPLES: At this point, what was then the Memphis Academy of Arts had been around for a number of years?

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, it had been around since the late 1930s I guess. Well, actually I don't know when you [can] say the thing began. I'm glad I'm not you, because I don't know when the College of Art started. I don't know whether Miss [Florence] McIntyer actually is the [beginning]. We used to date it from Florence McIntyer, and saying that she came in and started it. Obviously there was an art school, and then there was obviously a schism. You can date that schism; I don't remember the year in which she went one way and the College of Art went another. I don't know when the city funding kicks in. My sense of it is it kicks in the late 1930s. Certainly, by the time the war [World War II] comes along, you have an active enough school so that Mildred Hudson--when all the men go away--Mildred Hudson kicks in and becomes director. And she holds it until 1946.

At that point Ted [Rust] comes back. He was not in active military; he was a Red Cross, I believe. But anyway, he comes back from the war in whatever capacity, and takes over in 1946. And runs it, is director of it through the move from down on Adams [Street], [the] old Adams Street school. From Adams out to the park, and takes it on into 1973 or 1974. Somewhere like that where Jameson Jones has come over from Rhodes. He use to be provost there.

It's always been an incestuous relationship. Faculty has moved back and forth between those two institutions for as long as they've been there. But Jameson leaves the provostship of Rhodes; comes

over for two years under Ted; and then moves into the directorship in the 1970s.

MR. CUPPLES: Did your coming on board provide a reinforcement for the reaccrediting process?

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, there was a year--I got sidetracked, I sidetracked myself--in 1963-1964 when I was doing both. They, first, just moved me over and put me in an office and said "Please occupy this chair for two or three hours a week so the kids can honestly see somebody reading a book." [That] was what Ted said, and of course that was silly because everybody in that place read voraciously. But, nonetheless, I was there and I was supposed to look like Erasmus gone to Heaven. [No], I don't [really] know what I was supposed to look like, but I was there. And I was teaching three courses.

MR. CUPPLES: Which [courses] were they?

DEAN TICKLE: I was teaching freshman English which, at that time, was everybody in one section. I mean we're talking here a very small student body. I was teaching Freshman English and I did a--I guess I was teaching two classes, sorry, I guess I was teaching two--I did a Comparative Literature class at the senior level, that was what it was.

That year was the year of transition and I was also lecturing, still, at Rhodes. I was lecturing, I don't remember, maybe twelve hours at Rhodes. It was a hell of a load, I remember that. I remember just being so tired I was staggering. But anyway, during that time, it became apparent from Southern Association's evaluation

that it was not going to be enough to pay token homage to the gods. We were going to have to put in an academic program that was legitimate, that was on-site, that didn't involve going back and forth across North Parkway. And, that had office hours, and a real live human being reading a book.

At that stage, I moved with the blessing of both institutions. In fact, I think Rhodes's truck helped the Academy's truck move me as best I remember. But anyway, the maintenance men from both institutions moved me. And I moved bags, baggage, and books; my library moved. And, Ted laughed and said "Well, this is probably the biggest part of what we bought," [which] was the fact that now suddenly there was an office that was wall-to-wall books. We moved me then to the first floor, and that was a significant [symbolic] statement. He put me right across from him and we shared a secretary. He was making a statement. It was a nice place to be. It was kind of fun. It was certainly active. But, my door, my window, my wall looked out into his, and there I sat. I then picked up three courses because, at this point, there was very little money. Rhodes did not pay well, but the Academy was a hoot and a holler, I don't know how anybody could have done it if she hadn't been married.

MR. CUPPLES: Let me ask you a question that may fit here. When you made the move, and became Dean of Humanities on-site at what was then the Memphis Academy of Art, now the Memphis College of Art; what was the mission of the school as you understood it at that time?

DEAN TICKLE: Okay, it does fit. Let me answer it circuitously, because that's the only way I can answer anything anyway. I was young . . . [laughs] that's my excuse, I was young. [laughs] . . . I was young enough so that though I might have been atelier trained and restive under the other system, I still believed in the wisdom of the accreditation process. I believed fundamentally in those things that had driven Ted and the Board of Directors [to accreditation].

The Academy has always had a very active board of directors. During those years it was driven by a committee. It was driven by a committee because that's where the money came from. That committee not only had deep pockets of their own, and gave generously; they also had access to the public ear, to the city hall funds. So budget was dependent on that committee both in terms of its own funding, and its access to funds. So that Ted could not have moved for accreditation in 1953 had he not had a group of businessmen, and aficionados, and a few dilettantes who were pushing him in that direction. They could not have shoved him in that direction, [however,] or any other, if he hadn't believed in it.

I shared with him, therefore, a belief that, in order to stay afloat, you have to follow part of the system. It was apparent to everybody in 1963 "it didn't take no smarts at all" to know that any college was going to have be able to function [in a way compatible with] federal funding. We were coming into the golden age of [President Lyndon B.] Johnson's Grand New Era. And, of

course, by 1965 our suspicions were confirmed with the Higher Education Act of 1965, which fed and watered us for the rest of my tenure there, may I say. But, it didn't take a crystal ball to know that we were going to have to play the game. Therefore, I believed intellectually, or objectively, or impersonally, in the need to cleanup the [Academy's] act. To make it behave like a senior college. To make sure that we filled out, not only the letter of Southern Association's law, but the spirit of it, too. That our kids would be better if they had the paper.

I could look at Thorne [Edwards] and say to him and I did once or twice "The very things that are frustrating you, because you don't have the paper, [are the ones] you're asking your majors to enter into life [without, so that they can] anticipate the same frustration [you have]. That's not fair."

MR. CUPPLES: Was Thorne resistant?

DEAN TICKLE: Thorne was the most resistant. He was the most outspoken. And, we had a few go-ins--rounds--he and I. I think he was speaking for everyone. Martha Turner was also very vocal on this. But it was not reasonable. The very nature of their argument, it seemed to me, was the best argument for what I was trying to do. That is, to spare their kids the frustration of not being mobile in a structured profession. And, so, we had a go at it. I had been at this about six weeks when Ted Faiers, dear old Ted Faiers, came down to my office and said, "What are you doing at three o'clock this afternoon." And I said "Going home. "And he said" Why don't we spend some time together."

And we spent some three o'clocks, maybe four or five of them before it was over.

And he took me, and the first time was out in the lobby, and the second one down in the old student lounge where all good things happened. Once in the faculty lounge. And he said "We need to talk." [Phone rings] "We need to talk about the toes you're stepping on." Service is on [Referring to the phone answering service]. ". . . need to talk about the toes you're stepping on, and the gods you're bringing off the altar." And, in his own gentle way, he was the one who opened up for me, and articulated for me where the emotional values were. Where the gods were.

MR. CUPPLES: How long had you been there at that time?

DEAN TICKLE: Six weeks, maybe. No more than that. And he said "You're vocal" and I will never forget, it was he who said "You have the tools we don't have; you're trained in words, and you run over us because you are skilled, and you are fighting against a field of people who can't play your game. And your's is the world's game." And he was wonderful and dear, and we became very dear friends.

MR. CUPPLES: He was not antagonistic?

DEAN TICKLE: Oh, no! Oh, no, no! Because he had the validation, you see. He had the degree. He even thought we were right. He just was the spokesman for those who felt differently.

MR. CUPPLES: Ted Faiers was a degreed person?

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, he was a degreed person. And, it was Ted who then began to say "This institution is here to make people able to lead the world, to see the future and bring it back in signs and symbols. All we're here to do is to give the [students] the context and the protection to grow up in until they get ready to do that and [the] minimal craft [required] to do it with believability. And everything you do has to be geared to that canvas." [Then he always added,] "and if you come in here and want to gear this program to your words, I'll fight you until I get you out of here."

Very clear, very clear, so that everything was subordinate to the visual. And it opened up a wonderful world. I had a blast for eight years.

MR. CUPPLES: At that point, I would think that for a person trained in words, [and] from what I gather, a not strong background in the visual arts.

DEAN TICKLE: No, not at all.

MR. CUPPLES: Did this come across as a great challenge and opportunity or did you have the answers immediately?

DEAN TICKLE: Didn't have the answers at all; left there without the answers. Had a blast finding out how to [try to] do it. Our subsequent three o'clocks, when they did take place over the intervening years, were "Tickle, what happens if we approach this this away?" Or "My kids up on third floor," because he was chair of Painting, "my kids up on third floor are having an awful time with . . . ." and we became great friends.

We were constantly attacking the curriculum in an attempt to make verbality serve the visual; to create verbal literacy for those people, many of whom neurologically could never have it. I have given final exams in which the answers were drawn instead of written. But, by damn, they were right answers.

MR. CUPPLES: The answers were good?

DEAN TICKLE: Of course they were. But, what it became was the education of Phyllis, and not of the college kids. What we had to reeducate was me.

MR. CUPPLES: You've identified the difficulty from the faculty, or resistance from the faculty. Did that extend to the students as well?

DEAN TICKLE: No, because they were very innocent. They were out of context. They didn't know. It was fine. In fact, many of them who came in, especially from less educated families, less urbane, less sophisticated [were the most cooperative]. The bluer the collar, the greater the willingness to move, or the greater the desire that there be a certified degree, because they understood that was how they got somewhere. Where you got kids who had been affluent, or educated, or liberal; where the home had been a professional home, the atelier mattered because they knew such a thing existed. But, [the kids] were few in number. Most of the youngsters who had gone into the College of Art, at that time, came from blue collar. Most of America came from blue collar. If you had a very white collar, you were at Chicago, at the Art Institute, or you were at one of the New York

schools or at RISD.[3] RISD was big in those days. You weren't in a southern college. Now, I think that's changed markedly, and primarily because of Ted [Rust] and his genius at doing it.

MR. CUPPLES: Do you think they really knew what to expect in a professional art school?

DEAN TICKLE: No, I think they did not, because it's like writing in the South, or publishing in the South. There's not been any context before. And you must remember what Ted Rust, . . . well, [more accurately] what Ted Faiers was telling me, and what Ted Rust [was doing] in one sentence was; [this] school [is] here to give us context. Ted Rust gave us context. That's what the school was for. As surely as a lettuce bed, a cold frame [is laid out] in January so you can have lettuce, [so] that place was a cold-frame in which the artist ripened. That was all it was. It tried not to mess with your head. It gave you the minimum in terms of manipulation and intervention, but it gave you the maximum in terms of context, stimulus, protection.

MR. CUPPLES: Was it a cocoon?

DEAN TICKLE: Sure, because a chrysalis has to have one. But, boy did it produce a lot of butterflies.

MR. CUPPLES: Who created that?

DEAN TICKLE: Ted.

MR. CUPPLES: Ted Rust?

DEAN TICKLE: Ted's the genius. Ted, probably, among all the art educators in this country, in this century is

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[3]Rhode Island School of Design

the genius.

MR. CUPPLES: So, we might truly mark the College of Art, the Academy of Art, as a professional school training artists from the time that Ted Rust arrives.

DEAN TICKLE: That's right, you've got it. Until he leaves, and it changes at that point dramatically. Dramatically no, [that's wrong] . . . it begins eighteen months before he leaves, to slide . . . as he is sliding out, being ever the school man, he recedes rather than just leaving. And I watched him do it, though I was no longer there. He receded, and let Jameson come in. And this has nothing to do with Jameson. You could have put Ronald Reagan in there as Rust's follower. It doesn't matter who came in, but as surely as [President Andrew] Johnson couldn't one-upman [President Abraham] Lincoln, so, nobody could have come in after Rust and kept that magic. But, you can watch it recede [as Ted Rust leaves].

MR. CUPPLES: I would like to focus on those years. But, in very short description, from your knowledge, how would you describe the pre-Rust years? The pre 1946-years?

DEAN TICKLE: I think originally it was dilettante. And, I don't think there is any other word for that. You know, Miss McIntyer might not like that, her heirs might not, but there is every . . . . Charles Chandler is the one who speaks most completely about those years. He's the one who knows them the most intimately. I think it was originally dilettante. The out-

growth, for all I know, of a ladies social club in the really early years.

By the time they had bought the Adams Street house, from about 1940 until the move to the park, during those years it must have been wonderful. Because the good things, the good faculty that informed the Rust years, all came out of those days on Adams Street, and they spoke with great affection. And, Adams Street became kind of an almost Bethlehem to their religion. It was where it was born, and they were years in which the world didn't impact. The kids that went there didn't worry about degrees and credit hours. You just went, and you learned to draw. And you saw wonderful things, and you made crazy trips. Nobody had any money. I think half of the kids must have lived upstairs in the thing which was totally against the law.

Veda Reed, you need to get Veda Reed to tell you the tale about coming to town in the back of her daddy's car, and having him just dump her off. They just were wandering through; they were itinerants. There was no money. The dust bowl had blown them out of Oklahoma, and she just got off, and thought this is a nice place, and said "Bye daddy." Got off with a poke on her shoulder, and God knows where he went. I think it was years before she even knew where her daddy ended up. Put herself on the doorstep and said "here I am, I think I would like to draw." She can tell the tale much better. Paper Moon, it's that kind of story.

MR. CUPPLES: The old faculty that we've mentioned, did Ted Rust bring them in, or did he inherent them?

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, both. He inherited and brought in. He brought in very carefully. He inherited Burton [Callicott]. Well, he brought Burton back, that's not quite fair. Burton was there, and then he left and came back. And, he can tell whom he inherited. He inherited Martha [Turner]. He inherited Dorothy [Sturm], but again like Burton, she came and went, and came and went because Mr. Crump drove her out of town for awhile.

MR. CUPPLES: Dorothy?

DEAN TICKLE: Yes.

MR. CUPPLES: Ed Crump?

DEAN TICKLE: Oh, she fell amuck of the Crump Machine.

MR. CUPPLES: How did this happen?

DEAN TICKLE: Oh, this is a wonderful story. Now, Ted [Rust], again, can give you the straight of it. I'll probably do it wrong. She had an elaborate explanation for it. Nobody could get along with Dorothy. The archangel couldn't get along with Dorothy. They just don't make Christians that good. She was the most irascible and difficult human being--you can't defame the dead in the State of Tennessee if it will help you any--[laughs] but, no she was. She was also probably one of the most gifted. And I think that the reason that gift never achieved its fullest potential was the irascibility of personality. She was, of all the artists I've ever known, the victim. I've known two writers like her who are the victims of their own irascibility,

and cannot get the work out there because they can't discipline the personality.

But, be that as it may, she says that Mr. Crump didn't like her because her father was a banker. A reasonably successful one, Mr. Frank Sturm. And, Mr. Frank and Mr. Crump fell at logger-heads over some bank loans that Mr. Crump wanted to go one way. Mr. Sturm said "no, no, no." So, she said, she fell heir to animus that her father [had created]. She was, however, working at the city hospitals [then] in medical illustration, in that kind of thing, and apparently she just made a lot of noises that Crump wasn't about to tolerate. And, knowing Dorothy, I suspect he was right. And I'm not for Mr. Crump, but I imagine that she really was a gadfly in every way.

MR. CUPPLES: The reason I was interested in that, of course, was that Crump was such a legendary figure in Memphis history, and, in many ways, Dorothy Sturm was a legend in the history of Memphis art.

DEAN TICKLE: Oh, sure, well, he drove her out; she was enough of a power so he actively removed her from this city.

MR. CUPPLES: This had to have been a very delicate position for Ted [Rust] to [occupy in order to] build a top-flight faculty including Dorothy Sturm in a city which, at that time still felt the presence of Mr. Crump, and especially with Mr. Crump still alive into the 1950s?

DEAN TICKLE: Oh, yes, he died in 1955, 1954, 1955.* One of those, I don't know, but anyway it was the mid-1950s when he died. Oh, absolutely, and the fact that he managed, that Ted . . . . I mean if anybody [ever] spent his whole life between Scylla and Cherydis, it was Ted Rust running that college. And, how he did it--even though I would sit there and watch him do it--use to just absolutely amaze me. He survived three or four mayors, he survived the P.O.P.

MR. CUPPLES: What was P.O.P.?

DEAN TICKLE: Partners for Progress, no, Partners of Progress which was birthed, to a large extent, in the Academy, in the College of Art. The change to our present form of municipal government was brought about by Downing Pryor, who was Chairman of our board of directors at that time, and by many people on our board of directors. So, the whole shift in municipal government form was birthed out of, now that may be an overstatement Well, yes it was, it was birthed out of that College of Art Board of Directors. It was birthed out of the College of Art context. I think that is a fair statement.

MR. CUPPLES: Was the college being funded by the city at that time?

DEAN TICKLE: Absolutely, absolutely, yes. And, you've got Downing Pryor, who was then going to be head of the City Council under the new P.O.P. system. You've got Downing

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*The correct date is October 16, 1954.

who was also Chair of the College of Arts Board of Directors as well as part of its deep pockets.

MR. CUPPLES: Who are some of the other important members of that?

DEAN TICKLE: Well, Charlie and Katherine, starts with an F, for crying out loud. He is a realtor here in town. Drawing a blank, Charlie Freeburg! You've got Charles and Diane Crump, you've got Selma and Marshall Lewis, you've got Bernard Cohn, you've got Ike Myers, at one stage, you've got Mori Greiner, you've got Ben Goodman. Dear Lord, I haven't thought about this [in years]. Julie Isenberg, oh, to a large extent, your Jewish population.

MR. CUPPLES: Morrie Moss?

DEAN TICKLE: Yes. As in the center out here. But, you could almost make the roll call of established Memphis Jewry, and get a bulk of folk who came in. Obviously, Downing doesn't belong to that, and neither does Charlie [Freeburg] or Walter Armstrong, [a] huge supporter. And Alice [Armstrong], Alice chaired the board's . . . the board was structured in such a way that they had subcommittees, standing committees that matched faculty committees. As head of the Academic Committee, I chaired the Curriculum Committee, obviously. And, Alice Armstrong was the chair of the Board's Curriculum Committee. So, that Alice and I became great friends as a result of the fact that for three, four, five years, she was in charge of the Board's mirror committee and we had to work together. So the Armstrongs were very supportive of it.

MR. CUPPLES: What is the foundation for such support in a community such as Memphis for a city funded professional art school, in the South, where one might not really expect it to occur; is it an enlightened, sensitive hierarchy such as the one you describe?

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, I think that the emotional drive behind it; the thing that drives the motor is a--you know I'm always scared of altruism, I've been snake bit too many times--but I think primarily . . . In those days I never heard in those days words like "This will attract business to Memphis." I always want to toss my cookies when I hear that. That is the ultimate prostitution, and you cannot make a good state wife out of a prostitute. They just don't happen that way.

I never heard those words. I heard from those people; people like the Armstrongs, a real sense that if ever there were an area that was raw to the bone, Memphis was. [It was] and still is, a river town. It is a frontier river town, and its going to take another hundred years to get that out of here. All the Ramesseses in the world aren't going to change that. Now, we're making progress, but it was the Armstrongs, it was the Selma Lewises, it was the Downing Pryors who could say "This here be a river town, boys and girls, and the way you fix a river town is you teach it to grow up its own culture" And that's what they were doing.

MR. CUPPLES: It was a commitment [to the city]?

DEAN TICKLE: It was a commitment. Now, I also heard from people, especially like the Armstrongs, who were

urbane, who had been affluent for three or four generations, who had moved around the world, some sense of "I may starve to death before I die"--you know--"if we don't get something in here. And, you will find that the opera for instance . . . the Metropolitan coming here was driven by the same people who were driving the College of Art. [A big] part of [of their effort came from their] sense of being in a cultural dearth, which is no fun. I came to this town and lasted eighteen months before I said "I think I've made a serious mistake." There was nothing, absolutely nothing. And, there still is less than one would want.

But, I think that the drive, the emotional thrust, was that there has to be an indigenous culture before a place is real, and [that] it was time to make context again for that culture to happen [in]. And, then there was that private thing that said, "If we have a legitimate college of art, we can bring in shows; we, at least have the framework for access to the real world of art.

MR. CUPPLES: Let's go back to after your discussion with Ted Faiers, because I think that leads right back to here [this place in the interview].

DEAN TICKLE: And, never forget he said "I'll drive you out of here."

MR. CUPPLES: But, we're back now to the process or the techniques that Ted Rust is using--for want of a better word --to manipulate, to bring this institution along towards furthering the goals of the hierarchy of the city, and you're that person, or one of those people, and you've had your discussions with [Ted

Faiers]. Let's carry it a step further. How was curriculum between the lab studies, the painting, sculpture, pottery, jewelry, and the humanities or the academic side that you're trying to bring in and incorporate without driving a wedge between you and the old faculty; how did you go about this? How did you go about this with the [other] members of the faculty?

DEAN TICKLE: Okay, some of them never became believers.

[End of tape side "A;" begin tape side "B"]

DEAN TICKLE: Thorne and I quit crossing swords, and near the end of his tenure there, we even socialized together some, which I thought was great progress. They had us over and that kind of thing. He never really was fully persuaded, but he backed off, and he could laugh, and we found a cordiality and a commonality of purpose. What [was] required was that I convert to understanding that it really is art, and of course because I was basically a writer--it was not a difficult conversion. In the hands of a good tutor like Ted Faiers, it became a much more pleasant conversion.

Martha [Turner] always thought I was a hoot. And because we were women together, we could laugh. Occasionally, she would get hysterical, ream me out for having done in one of her kids, have a screaming fit, and then laugh about it. I always got the message. And we usually fixed it, and we fixed a bunch of things on an individual basis, because we weren't about to lose somebody that was gifted in fabric over a dadgum Dante test. She knew it, and I knew it. But, she would occasionally fall-back.

Burton, I think, never articulated his concerns very directly, [but]. I think he never laid them to rest.

MR. CUPPLES: So, you feel like Burton; to this day, there's some reservations [on his part]?

DEAN TICKLE: Oh, yes, definite ones, and I think he will tell you that. He had trouble getting into a good fight about it, and I do a lot better if we can have a good fight. If Martha can come and scream me, and damn me to three layers of hereafter, or something, and get it over with, and then we can deal with the problem, and, I can holler back--and that's not to say that you should run a school by shrieking matches, I don't mean that--but, if you can honestly say "Man, that really makes me mad, you're not hearing me" and we can communicate, then you can usually fix it. Burton [Callicott] never could stomp his fist, uh, his foot. And, so I never knew where he was.

But, by and large, certainly Veda [Reed], who had come in under the Adams Street school, and is now [1988] Dean of Faculty, had the clearest and purist vision of how the two had to interface. And, she was always a port in the storm. They trusted and believed her, because she was one of theirs, one whom they had trained, and reared, and housed, and clothed literally.

Nadine, in her own gentle magnanimity of soul, and Georgia knew; I think they trusted my motives, I think they even agreed that it had to go that way. Dorothy didn't trust anybody. But, Dorothy was wonderful. She was a great sparring partner. She took you on honestly, and fifty percent of the time she was right.

It was when she was right fifty-five percent of the time that I didn't like her. So, gradually we worked this out, and it became--and Ted [Rust] will tell you this I think, because he told me time and time again--it became a matter of they didn't buy into the academics, but they bought into me. It was a personal trust, it was a political thing.

MR. CUPPLES: Something that may have some bearing, and I'm just stabbing at this; if I recall correctly, the school offered a Certificate as well as a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree?

DEAN TICKLE: That's right, that was how we hedged our bets.

MR. CUPPLES: For want of a better way to phrasing it, who was vindicated; what percentage of the students opted for the Certificate as opposed to working for Degree which obviously entailed an academic curriculum?

DEAN TICKLE: At the time that I came on board, that distinction was already there and the [programs] were seen as coequal, and that wasn't rhetorical, that was a fact. You either went a certificate route or you went an academic route, but we were all the same. By the time I left there in 1971, the Certificate was for retards, and the kids would put it that way. It had washed down; it only took it eight years to degenerate in the students eyes, so, that the whole sense of atelier, of dignity, of choosing to educate yourself by one method instead of another was gone.

MR. CUPPLES: Was this a result of your success?

DEAN TICKLE: No, I would not have that, I will fight to the death to avoid having that baby laid at my door. No, I think it was instead . . .

MR. CUPPLES: I didn't mean that pejoratively.

DEAN TICKLE: No, no, no [laughs] but I will not. But I think it was a recognition of a fact that kids coming in, in 1965 were blue collar enough, unsophisticated enough to want the piece of paper that let them go M.F.A. [Master of Fine Arts Degree], that let them go into teaching and a living.

MR. CUPPLES: That leads us to another question. Were the students coming in, at that point, such as the students at Rhodes, looking for the means, the method to enter into another program so that they could teach?

DEAN TICKLE: Increasingly, I watched that during the last eight years. Where they actually began to focus as Rhodes kids did, and you see all this may say that the atelier people were right . . . that once we allowed that process, then we put that bull's eye up there. What we did not do was say that the only way you can get that B.F.A. is to do this, this, and this. As long as how you got to that degree was reasonably fluid, we didn't mess with their head.

Now, in the years since I have left, I think--it appears to me from the outside looking in--that those rules have become more and more rigid, and there is less and less flexibility now. I don't know that, it just seems that way.

MR. CUPPLES: Let's be subjective a little bit. A great deal.

DEAN TICKLE: All right. A great deal. That seems to be all we're doing here.

MR. CUPPLES: Of course.

DEAN TICKLE: How can one do otherwise?

MR. CUPPLES: How can it be any other way? From your perspective, looking at the products, how has that change in the system, change in the goals, affected the quality of the product that the student was producing; not necessarily the quality of the product that the school was producing, but the students themselves? Is it turning out good artists?

DEAN TICKLE: Being verbal and terribly unable critically within the visual arts--and I did my years of art history and attending lectures, and watching studio as part of my eduction after I [got] there, because the faculty very kindly invited me in; and I did a good deal of studio by observation because they felt I needed to know those skills if I was going to teach these kids, and they were absolutely right. Nonetheless, I never gained the critical skills with which one answers that kind of question well or adequately. So, let me, indeed, be subjective. Let me gut react. From 1970, 1971, 1972, along in there, there was, in my opinion, a remarkable weakness in every show. That makes it impersonal. Every show of student work, and to no small extent, God forgive me, of new faculty work.

MR. CUPPLES: Is this as Ted Rust is beginning [to leave]?

DEAN TICKLE: This is as Ted is beginning to leave. He is receding. That weakness, although he really begins

the recession in about 1973--getting ready [to leave], that weakness is there.

In the last two or three years, [however,] if you look at student work at the College of Art, you find again soul, and vigor, and passion. What happened in that almost fifteen [intervening] years, I think, was a passage. Now, again, because I'm not wise enough or informed enough, that same fifteen years may have happened all over the country, and I didn't have access "to all over the country." That fifteen years, to a large extent, happened in American poetry which I find real interesting. So, it may be that this is not an isolated phenomenon, nor one caused by local stimuli, but, in effect, is part of American cultural progress.

Because poetry and painting will always--and, those are the two you look at, because the other visual arts follow painting, and the other verbal arts follow poetry and we all know that. The cutting edge in each division is those two. Painting and poetry in this country, in American culture, have always jumped back and forth about which one was leading which, but they have always been the front-runners. American poetry has the same sort of peculiar weakness, and it is--for lack of any better terms--a lack of passion. And, it was tired work, just real tired.

Now, you can say Vietnam, who knows? National guilt, who knows? Transition into exponentially growing information; we became a nation of informaniacs during those fifteen years. [Who knows?] Those are the fifteen years in which suddenly we thought

if we knew a fact, we were wise. The growth of the documentary in public media, the growth of the computer. All of those things that so overloaded our sensory perceptions with intellectual ones so that there was a kind of a sensory paralysis that impacts literature.

And I suspect that may have been what was happening. Those kids were just so bombarded. And, there's such a credibility in the American mind to fact, as if somehow because it's a fact, God said it. And, [there's a corollary:] because I felt it, He didn't. "What I feel is less than what I know." And, that's bullshit. But, until you get a faculty who knows that, and is telling kids that, [you're in trouble. And in the 1970s] suddenly the [kids] are in an institution which has just fought that battle and come out on the side of fact. So, I think it's worst then. What I see from about 1982, 1983, somewhere along there, now, is the same thing I'm seeing in American poetry. Once again, the soul sings.

MR. CUPPLES: You made an interesting comment; faculty. I think at that time that we're discussing--we've already discussed the old faculty--and, about that time we began to see, and you can probably help me on the specifics here, some of that old faculty getting older.

DEAN TICKLE: That's right.

MR. CUPPLES: I would imagine beginning to cut back, less energy because of that.

DEAN TICKLE: Well, the vision isn't new. They had quit renewing the vision, that's what happened.

MR. CUPPLES: And, some of them actually beginning to leave the school. And, unfortunately, as now in the case of Ted Faiers, we have lost him, forever, with the exception of his work. We begin to see new faculty take their place. Now, I will interject a couple of names that are kind of not totally in that space, but they came in and left during--for want of a better word--that Golden Era in the history of the College of Art. And, I think of Townsend Wolf, and the transition from Townsend to Joe Cave and Clay Hagwood.

DEAN TICKLE: Who, then you see were gone by the end of the 1960s. They were there during the Golden Age, they left at the end of the 1960s.

MR. CUPPLES: What I'm really leading to in a circuitous manner myself; do we have a breakdown in the teaching?

DEAN TICKLE: Oh, sure.

MR. CUPPLES: That can be correlated with the other problems, and is that now being corrected, is there a strong faculty, once again, being reassembled?

DEAN TICKLE: Oh, sure, yes, and, that's not true of everybody that came aboard. But yes, there was definitely the influx of much younger people who were not nearly as sure. The old passions had lost some of their fire. There's no question about it. Dorothy went out steaming, I'm sure. She probably

never lost her fire. But, some of the others were continuing to rework metaphor and symbol that had come with them into the doors.

And, it's hard to continue, especially when one is teaching, it is so hard to continue to find new metaphor, new vision. That's one of the reasons you have to leave teaching I think; if you're going to stay productive in the arts privately. But, yes, when they began to continue to reinvent themselves instead of to find new things to invent; when they got tired, when they got ensconced, all that began to happen; then [too], the new faculty that came in were primarily very young.

And, they came in, I think, out of the 1960s, with the confusion of that peculiar era straight into [Viet] Nam, straight into the drugs. I smelled my first marijuana. And we had our first two expulsions. When all of that happened, and this certainly was not isolated to the Academy [Laughs] when all of that happened, it shows up in decreased passion because nothing so decreases passion as a real good confusion. And, in decreased vision. Nobody knew why he was there. I wish I had a nickel for every kid who wanted to know why am I even alive.

MR. CUPPLES: So, the art student was no different?

DEAN TICKLE: The art student was no different. And, this begins, I see the beginning of it in 1969-70, and 1970-71, my last two years at the Academy. My office is beginning to be visited by folk who would like counseling. I become mother hen to a bunch of kids. This is not what you go to graduate school to do, but it became interesting. But, primarily, and interestingly

enough, those last two years, my office chair was occupied as much by young faculty as it was by students. And they were sharing their confusion, and it is not a confusion I would want to recall for [the] public, because it was private. But, it was there.

And, those confusions, I think showed up in the kids' work because [of a teacher]. A teacher, to be any good, has to know in his own soul that "it" is good, and that I have access to "it". I can call "it" down. I may not take "it" to Kroger shopping with me, but "it" is there, and I can touch "it", and I can borrow from "it" and create "it". And, he has to have that. It's not enough to psych himself up every morning with twelve cups of coffee to go in there and act like he's got "it". Kids know [the difference].

Half of the new fellows, particularly in painting, which is where it hurts the school--when painting goes, the whole school goes--didn't have "it". And, they knew they didn't have "it". They were dying out of need for "it". And, the kids knew, and it just all went.

MR. CUPPLES: Let me ask you a nondirectional question? Is painting the queen of the visual arts?

DEAN TICKLE: Of course, there is no question. As is poetry the queen of literature. You can't do anything with poetry financially. It is something that is going to become something that society, in this country, will come to value again as it is valued in much of Europe. Simply because it is a necessary part of existence.

MR. CUPPLES: Let me while we have . . . [phone rings].

DEAN TICKLE: Now, that one's not on a machine.

[The tape recorder was shut off for Dean Tickle to answer the telephone]

MR. CUPPLES: After a short pause for the telephone, we would like to ask you a few questions. First, I would like [to] just kind of run down some of the old faculty who I identified earlier, and get your perception of what their contributions were during the Golden Age. We'll start with Martha Turner, I believe she taught Two Dimensional Design?

DEAN TICKLE: She taught Two Dimensional Design, Silkscreening, Fabric. Lord, Martha! Martha was a kind of patron saint to the children--she called them children--that she took in. Martha bonded one-on-one. The Freshmen always ended up hating her guts, en masse. They hated her guts, and she was a hellion. She could just ream them out, she could shriek. However, in each Freshman class, the two or three who were going to be turned-on to textile, and to two-dimensional [design] bonded with her, and she became everything to them. Mother, confessor, defender of the faith, everything. She was a very skilled teacher with her majors, and I am amazed at the number of people whom I will see now who went through there, who will always say "You remember when Martha" thus and so. It's always Martha whom they remember. Martha and Ted Rust whom they recall. Because it was that enormous bonding. In her own way, she was everything that was weak about the old system, though, I thought. She didn't somehow know how

to convey anything except visuality, and that of course was the problem. But, you had to respect her ability to take those kids and make fine artists out of them. She belonged to the old system, she got trapped in the transition. I never will forget, she came out one day--I lectured right across the hall from her one year--and she came out one day and slammed the door of her studio, and hit the wall like this [Dean Tickle sharply hit the table with her fist], and this little old tiny woman, skinny as she could be, didn't have anything to hit with, hit the wall "Dammit, to hell" she said. And I went outside and said "What's wrong." And she said "I have told those Goddamn kids the same thing every year for thirty years, and they still don't know it." [Laughs]

And, I loved it. It was typical of Martha. She'd said it to thirty years' worth of classes, and by darn, by now, they should know.

MR. CUPPLES: Is it fair to assume that [with] one-to-one, small groups that she communicated better than in the class?

DEAN TICKLE: Oh, she was wonderful. Most gifted, I don't know really, I think she was the one of all that old faculty who most deeply inspired at an ongoing level. Because, while she lacked the skills to work out here in the real world, she knew that the good was there, and she could tap it any time she wanted to.

MR. CUPPLES: Did she have trouble, then, communicating to a large group.

DEAN TICKLE: Oh, she had trouble communicating to a large group of anything. She had trouble in faculty communicating half the time.

MR. CUPPLES: Next one, then, is Thorne Edwards

MR. CUPPLES: Thorne. Thorne was the Greek god. To look upon him was to look upon Apollo, right? Do your remember?

MR. CUPPLES: Was he [in] pottery?

DEAN TICKLE: He was pottery. The most gifted probably, of all of us, in his own production. His pots, his pieces were marvelous. They sang. He was an artist who happened to also teach. I think primarily to get the studio space. And Doreen [Edwards], should not be [left out], You need to talk to Thorne and Doreen.

MR. CUPPLES: His wife?

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, you can't just talk to Thorne. Because, in many ways Doreen, though she ran the faculty, I mean the book store, was a very active member of the faculty. She, in many ways was Dean of Women, or maybe Dean of Students in the days before we had one. And served that function. The kids adored her. They were great. Thorne and I didn't agree. Thorne had all the defensiveness of a man who had not read books, and he would tell me that. [He would say] "I haven't read these things." And, it angered him that he hadn't, and he felt defensive about it. Nonetheless, he was personable, very talented, private, a good teacher. And, he, too, inspired. When you majored with

Thorne, you came out with a whole kind of religion. And the clay had to function within the religious context.

MR. CUPPLES: Same skills, ability to communicate on a personal level?

DEAN TICKLE: Well, he was very good in a crowd. He was very good in a crowd. He could tell you exactly what he thought.

MR. CUPPLES: But he focused well with a few students?

DEAN TICKLE: That's right, he was very good.

MR. CUPPLES: Moving into the next one, Burton Callicott. He taught, if I recall correctly, Drawing, Painting, and Calligraphy?

DEAN TICKLE: And Calligraphy, a lot of calligraphy. And, a lot of the drawing and painting. We need also to add to your list before we forget it, Linda Ireland. About whom we have to talk before this is over. Because he [Burton Callicott] also taught Art History. My mnemonic here is that he did a lot of the art history, and was part of the academic team in the humanities, MAN course. That Sophomore year MAN course.[5] Burton was the artist, the studio artist, who was in that humanities. So, he taught both sides of the fence.

Burton was, is, heavily into Theosophy, and Universalism, and Unitarianism, and it informs everything he does. In the same way

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[5]MAN was a joint venture with Southwestern [now Rhodes] College. Instructors from both institutions combined on a rotating schedule to lecture on mankind's evolution through time by his religious experiences, philosophical thoughts, and creative activities.

that Christianity informs everything I do, and at that level, more than [would be true with] the casual follower of a faith. He is servant to those beliefs. So that the painting he taught worked off of the known principles of Eastern Mysticism.

And he taught those principles, and he taught painting from that point of view. Likewise with the drawing. Likewise his own understanding of why one is an artist. His raison d'etre is based in mysticism and in theosophy. And, I think he would tell you the same thing . . . that the artist is the expression of the man, and it is the man you must educate . . . and [that] you [must] educate within that tradition of Western Orientalism, Occidental Orientalism, some kind of oxymoron like that.

I think it is fair to say that half the kids didn't know what he was talking about a hundred percent of the time. I think everybody who touched him, a hundred percent of them, knew there was something there. I never heard a kid question whether Mr. Callicott knew what he was doing. I heard a lot of kids say "Do I know what Mr. Callicott is doing?", and the answer was "Goodness, no, I haven't the foggiest!" Burton was always a moon around our sun. Reflective, giving light, important, much more obvious than the rest of us who tended to be a group. But he never was actually a part, because he came from a different philosophic base.

MR. CUPPLES: That's very interesting.

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, he was a strange one, he is fascinating.

MR. CUPPLES: We've already discussed Ted Faiers, just a little bit [though].

DEAN TICKLE: Ted Faiers was what made the faculty go. He was Dean of the Faculty. I'm not sure that was official; I think it was unofficial. He was certainly a recognized painter outside of the region. But, he was basically a teacher. And, a very generous soul. Had a good soul.

MR. CUPPLES: John McIntyer?

DEAN TICKLE: John McIntyer was our blithe spirit.

MR. CUPPLES: John taught Sculpture and 3D Design [Three Dimensional Design]?

DEAN TICKLE: That's right, John was the magic. John was the one who was not defensive about anything that I ever caught him at. Who had no rules and simply did not know they were there. I mean he didn't obey them because he didn't see them. Every kid in distress would turn to John. John always was willing to give; he's the most generous human being I've ever [known]. I thought, at times, his naivete was a great detriment to those kids who did turn [to him], and a great detriment to the school. On the other hand, every good art school probably needs a John McIntyer. He was creative about how he brushed his teeth. He came in the room, and the room was brighter. He was so tuned-in to the whole creative process that he never could tune-out.

MR. CUPPLES: Was he able to communicate this or develop this out of his students?

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, he was able to give it, but not with words. It flowed out of him. He was damn near inarticulate.

However, he was also very widely read, interestingly enough. There was very little I had ever read that John hadn't already read. And he would share books with me. He would say "You want to read this" or he would stumble around, and he would stand there, and look and say "You know, if I brought you this, would you . . . ." It would take him five minutes to get it out. But he has brought me many a book that I did, indeed, need to read, and he was absolutely right.

But he had no theory, he had no sense of theory, because it was indigenous, whereas, Burton had so much theory that you never got at any sense that there was the creative juice there [as well]. They were Mutt and Jeff. They were Ying and Yang, the two of them.

MR. CUPPLES: Sandy Kincannon?

DEAN TICKLE: Sandy was a dear, was he not?

MR. CUPPLES: Sandy taught Drawing, Etching?

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, a gentle, a gentle soul. The kind of a teacher every student needs to have at least once in his career. I did not know him well, he died. Right as I was coming in, he was going out. I knew him for only one year. But, the kids loved him. He was the teddy bear of the faculty I always thought in that brief time.

MR. CUPPLES: Since you did not know him long, there's not much to say about him, then, at this point. Georgia McHenry?

DEAN TICKLE: Georgia, dear quiet Georgia, who lived in terror of Dorothy Sturm [Laughs] for years.

MR. CUPPLES: Did she teach anything besides Jewelry?

DEAN TICKLE: Metalsmithy. You see, when Dorothy retired, Georgia took over and was Chair of Metal. And, was very good, but who truly, as long as Dorothy was there, did not want to rattle the bars. And, who became the interface between Dorothy and Ted Rust, and Dorothy and the Board. She was constantly protecting Dorothy from herself. Georgia, who was very good in jewelry privately, did very well; but, [it was she] who really was the peacemaker among us.

MR. CUPPLES: We've discussed Dorothy Sturm.

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, [laughs] who was our gadfly.

MR. CUPPLES: Is there anything else to say about Dorothy?

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, everybody needs a gadfly. She was the burr under our saddle. Had she not been there, we would not have been as good, but I don't know anybody who didn't cordially want to deck her, at least once a day.

MR. CUPPLES: Jason Williamson?

DEAN TICKLE: Jason was Advertising of course. Jason, who, oh dear, . . . who was the mean spirited one among us. His vision was no greater than what a kid should be taught to make it on the market as an advertising artist. If there were a redneck, he was it. And, [he] always felt like he was odd man out, and let you know he felt like he was odd man out.

MR. CUPPLES: I was going to ask you that.

DEAN TICKLE: He knew it. He knew it, and it made him smaller. Maybe, what I should say [is] "the small-minded one of us." And, who truly--he did watercolor--interestingly enough, he was very good. The kids loved it, and he has produced. If you look at the advertising world, there are an awful lot of graduates out there who got it from Jason. He was good at it. It was just that his insides weren't a happy place to be.

MR. CUPPLES: Did this cause problems internally?

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, yes, it caused a major schism, we used to say, between second and third floor. Advertising was on second. Painting was on third. Even the kids. Certainly it appertained strongly between Jason and the rest of the faculty. But it carried over into the kids, and so the advertising kids didn't want to socialize with the fine arts kids, and the fine arts kids regarded the advertising kids as less than they. It became a real problem.

MR. CUPPLES: Who held this together?

DEAN TICKLE: Who held the tension together or who caused it?

MR. CUPPLES: I think I know the answer, but this division between, not the faculty, but the students, yet--as we've already [discussed] who were in the productive Golden Era of the school--what, I'm really asking, is this Ted Rust's influence?

DEAN TICKLE: Oh, yes, Ted Rust, who is a bright enough guy to know that a healthy tension gets us all further down the road, and who therefore never stomped it out . . . it's like every good weed. You grow Marigolds in the garden to keep

the bugs out, but you don't have to like how Marigolds smell. And when Jason would get out of hand--and it was almost always Jason who would take it too far--I have known Ted [Rust] to rein him in a time or two. Especially when it began to spill over into the kids' social life.

MR. CUPPLES: We've discussed Veda [Reed]. Veda taught, help me here?

DEAN TICKLE: She taught. She came in under Martha and did Two Dimensional [Design]. Dorothy did Basic Design. You've never had Basic Design until you've had it with Dorothy Sturm. But, then, Martha did the other Two Dimensional [class]. Veda came in and started in Two Dimensional [Design]. Teaching that, teaching Fabric, Silkscreen, Seriograph, Printmaking, all of those under Martha. And, then, moved into doing some painting, too.

MR. CUPPLES: That leaves one we mentioned earlier that we need to talk about, Linda Ireland.

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, and don't forget Nadine [Parker], and those old ones.

MR. CUPPLES: Well, let's go to Nadine, first.

DEAN TICKLE: Nadine, Nadine who was the other half of Georgia. Nadine, who--he won't tell you this, he may not want me to tell you this--Nadine was Ted's [Rust] port in the storm. When it got really rough, when his soul needed restoration, she could give him what none of the rest of us could. We probably loved him as passionately. Anna Farris could give him some of

it, I could give him some of it, but none of us together--all of us--weren't worth one little toe of Nadine's left foot. Nadine and Rodgers, her husband, somehow managed. They were world travelers, their world, too, was large. Their vision was great. Their souls were humongous. Galactic souls, if anybody ever had them.

And Nadine who was not that gifted, oddly enough, as an artist herself. Her canvases are not that strong. They're almost weak. I guess. They technically are competent, but certainly there's no great vision. Nadine's art was in being the nurturer, the visionist. She could see where it was going. She loved the kids. She loved art. She loved Ted. She knew how to make it all work. She was the grandmother that made us all happy.

When he [Ted Rust] got in trouble, it was always she who [he would turn to for consultation] The thing she really loved was the children's work, and she headed the Children's School until Betty Gilow took it over. And, Betty Mitchell Gilow can tell you about Nadine.

Let me tell you one tale. I may have told you, I don't remember. We took the kids to Mexico. After they had finished their first year with us, they could go abroad. And, it was a wonderful experience for them. I took them one year. And I roomed with a little gal in Painting, Margot Cruz, and [she] didn't have two nickels to knock together.

It was a real difficult thing for her daddy to send her to art school. We were sitting in Mexico, and Margot didn't speak any Spanish much. She'd had a basic course, but she didn't know what

was going on. We had to live with Spanish families. We had been there maybe two weeks, and she hadn't heard a word, yet, that she understood. She was at that level of confusion which lets down all the emotional barriers, and suddenly she was crying. And I said "What's wrong?" And she could at least articulate it. It was "just so strange and mind-blowing," and she "wasn't home-sick," she was "just frustrated."

And, she said "This is what Mrs. Parker told me." And, I said "What." And, she said "Mrs. Parker told me that it was going to hurt, but that it was so necessary if I was going to be a good artist that I let it hurt." And, I said "How wonderful of Nadine." [It] Wasn't surprising. And she said, "and she told me when she gave me the money to do it" [Soft chuckle] that, I would then owe it to see that some other kid did it later." And, that was how [Margot] had got to Mexico.

MR. CUPPLES: Do you know of her helping other students in this way? I'm not asking for a recitation, but you are aware [of others]?

DEAN TICKLE: Oh, yes, and [she] was not wealthy you understand. This was not an affluent woman. Rodgers, I think certainly made a good income. God knows the Academy didn't make any of us any money, but, yes, it was always there, and Margot went on to do a fine career.

MR. CUPPLES: The last one along that line is again, coming back to Linda Ireland.

DEAN TICKLE: Linda comes in, in the Golden Years. And, she comes in, and is a big part of that shift over to the academic. Linda is that thing which is known as the verbally articulate, competent visual artist. I think that Linda privately would say that she yearned to be a painter. And that probably [she] was at a competent level, but basically her skill was in bridging the two worlds.

Gorgeous education. I should live so long to be so beautifully educated! Out of Newcomb at undergraduate. At graduate . . . I've forgotten where the graduate degree is. An ivy league, I can't remember. Anyway, beautifully educated, brilliant woman. Brilliant woman who comes in there, who marries actually, Harry Ireland who is an attorney here in town, and who gets brought in here as a bride. And looks around and says "My Lord; I'm in deep trouble," and it didn't take her six months to figure it out [that] she was in trouble.

But who attached herself very quickly to that school in Art History. And who could make Art History "studio-tolerant." A lot of the memorabilia around here, [in Dean Tickle's home] the physical objects [are] out of [her] pre-columbian [class]. I've got some of the best pre-columbian fabulous fakes you ever saw [from times when] when Ireland did a three hour course in Pre-columbian Art, which was her specialty. And those kids ended up actually remaking [the pottery artifacts] on-site in clay beds up here in north Shelby County and firing them in ground ovens.

So she taught the academics with studio techniques, as I had to learn to do in teaching them. And she was part of what made, to those kids coming in, the certifiable academic valid. Part of that shift to the certificates for retards is because Linda made knowing it, and being able to say it, so very attractive. She was brilliant, and they knew it. She could talk to them about every book they ever read. She knew it well enough so she could teach it with her hands [tied], simply. And, they coveted her energy and her expertise.

And, a big part of why that shift happened was that she legitimatized it. She answered the atelier without ever meaning to. I mean, it was not her intent. That was just who she was.

MR. CUPPLES: There's another name we haven't talked about much, and while I have a little tape, I would like to see if I can get three names in, but I will prioritize them. Townsend Wolf, being the first, and I believe Townsend taught Painting.

DEAN TICKLE: Yes, he left as I came. So, we never overlapped. But, boy did he leave a big wave behind him. I mean, that was a gifted teacher. He has to have been. Townsend and I know each other. [He's] in-and-out [of Memphis] because he's close, and all that kind of thing. And his canvases are wonderful. To this day they are great. But, I never knew him [while he was at the Academy].

MR. CUPPLES: We mentioned earlier, I asked you the question if painting was the queen of the visual arts. Where

do we pick up as you enter. Townsend Wolf leaves. He's made a big wave. Who picks up with the Painting Department at that time.

DEAN TICKLE: You know, I can't remember who was then under Ted Faiers at that point.

MR. CUPPLES: Could it be Clay Hagwood?

DEAN TICKLE: I guess Clay comes the next year, doesn't he?

MR. CUPPLES: I think so.

DEAN TICKLE: I think there's a year in between when there's not anybody. I think poor old Ted's doing it all.

DEAN TICKLE: You may be right.

DEAN TICKLE: I'm almost sure. Can't remember anybody else. We can look at the catalog, and I'll say "how could I forget that!" But, he's the one I remember, and I remember a very tired Ted Faiers as a result.

MR. CUPPLES: Well, then, Clay Hagwood.

DEAN TICKLE: Then, Clay comes in, and then, Joe.

MR. CUPPLES: Joe Cave?

DEAN TICKLE: And then you get Bruce Tibbits. And then you get that blond guy, whom I can't remember. That guy got so mad at me once he raised his hand to hit me, I never will forget it.

MR. CUPPLES: Did the painting recover from Wolf's departure?

DEAN TICKLE: Interestingly enough, he left it in good health, and it thrived right on beyond him, which is finally the mark of a good teacher, isn't it . . . that it can survive his coming and his going?

MR. CUPPLES: Very briefly, I'm looking at my tape. We haven't focused on the product that much, and that's the students. Let's see if you can recall some of the outstanding students that have gone on to be, what I would consider, a shining example of the school as a professional school for training artists. Do any come to mind, off-hand?

DEAN TICKLE: Well, certainly Jean Thickens, and Francis Key, and Lynn Long, who's at Ole Miss now. There he hangs. [Points to a painting] Betty Mitchell, who's now at Rhodes as Betty Gilow. Oh, my goodness, Francis Cuttings.

MR. CUPPLES: I won't let anyone hold it against you for not thinking of them.

DEAN TICKLE: Bob Shettlesworth, I saw the other day. What a career he's had. Steve Kling. Yes they're everywhere. They're around the world.

MR. CUPPLES: Maybe next time we get together, we will have some more names that we can bring up.

DEAN TICKLE: Well, you can do the rich and famous. You can do things like Hilton. John McConnico, who went through there and is now, you know. . . . I mean the rich and famous are there.

MR. CUPPLES: That's right, Joe McConnico.

DEAN TICKLE: Joe McConnico, he now goes as Hilton.

MR. CUPPLES: I knew him before he was Jay Hilton.

DEAN TICKLE: Sure, sure.

MR. CUPPLES: I'll stop the tape with that.

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